



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

August 25, 2022

SEASON OF PENTECOST

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 34



UCJCI 42nd SYNOD THEME – Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE (Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism)

Responding With Humility & Generosity

By Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

Please read Hebrews 13:1-8

We are invited to reflect on the sub-theme, ‘Responding With Humility and Generosity’ as we continue to journey with the Synodical theme ‘Rooted, Resilient: Responding in Hope.’

As a denomination, constantly we remind ourselves that God expects that our response to humanity must always be characterized by humility. We should never see ourselves as being “above” others. A humble church, which is generous with God’s gifts and respectful of others, is what God expects us to be.

This pericope in Hebrews 13 is a timely reminder to the Church and us as individuals of the required Christian attitude and practices that need to be followed and displayed in the world. It provides a comprehensive list for us to adhere to as we share in the faith. The list includes the following: Love for each other and those in the world, hospitality, care for the incarcerated, support for those who suffer in body, the importance of marriage and family, and avoidance of the lust and lure of money.

Humility and Generosity in the Church

Love for each other in the Church ought to come from an understanding of what it means to be humble and generous. Humility is the recognition that we are equal to the other in our dependence on God and God’s sustaining grace. It is the capacity to see the image of God in each person we meet and to treat each person with dignity and respect. It is also at times the ability to place the need of the other above one’s own needs. Generosity is being able to respond to the needs of others beyond the minimum requirement. It requires being willing and able to do so without complaint or resentment. These capacities of humility and generosity are high callings and can best be achieved when we are truly engaged in our commitment to Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

The initial call in this text is for Christians to display humility, and generosity and have paramount love for each other. We are called to live according to these precepts so that the faith is attractive and compelling for others. *“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.”* Unfortunately, this is a vital

yet at times difficult calling for those who belong to the Church. The complexity of loving those who belong to the Church is caused by strict adherence to denominational systems and doctrines. So often, we have been critical and condemnatory of each other’s beliefs, theology, and practices, much to the dismay of the world. So much so, the Church over the centuries has at times lost credibility in the eyes of the world. As such, in today’s world, the Church is left to compete with other agencies and organizations to attract people to our beliefs and hope in Christ Jesus.

Sadly, at times even within the same denomination or worse yet, within the same congregation, we fail to display our love for each other. The subtlety is that we smile and are congenial, however, when we see the rancour and hear the disdain expressed over things that upset us in the Church, one cannot help but wonder about the love we proclaim for fellow Christians.

We must remind ourselves daily that *φιλαδέλφεια* (philadelphia), the love of the siblings forms the foundation of the expression of our faith. One must love and love without measure those who belong to the body of Christ. The disease of hate is manifest in resentment, anger, and bitterness towards others and it should not find room in our lives or the Church. The capacity to love must be undergirded by the willingness to offer forgiveness and seek reconciliation. Such actions are rooted in a spirit of humility and those who name Christ as Saviour and Lord ought to be quick to seek and offer forgiveness. Humility should enable us to show mercy, offer grace, and enable generosity of thought and actions of kindness. Can we hear again in the Church today the writer’s call in this Epistle to love one another?

Humility and Generosity outside the Church

Once those in the Church understand how to love each other and how-to live-in humility and give generously, it becomes a serious requirement and responsibility to extend these attitudes and actions beyond the fellowship of believers. It requires unconditional love for all with whom we share the commonness of humanity. This unconditional love is without alloy, distrust, scorn, discrimination, or abuse.

The call is to not only love those we are acquainted with but to love strangers. This is difficult as we tend to treat strangers with suspicion, and we are usually speculative about the motives and intentions of those who come within our personal or community borders. We tend to be dismissive especially if the strangers are not akin to the typology of what we decree as ‘normal and acceptable.’ Strangers who present with language, race, culture,

and social norms that are different from what is deemed normal and acceptable are sometimes regulated to the margins and are dismissed or denigrated.

In Leviticus 19:34, God enjoins Moses that God's people should love strangers. The instruction is clear regarding how Israel should treat strangers as they too were once sojourners and strangers in a strange land.

"A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the LORD the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O LORD, hast given me." (Deut. 26:5-10)

Strangers need to be respected and afforded the opportunities to enable them to survive. Ruth, a Moabitess, was able to glean in Boaz's field as the principle of the reapers not taking all the crops in the field was operative. (Ruth 2:1-3)

The love of the stranger is embedded in acts of hospitality.

The heart is the seat of hospitality and the springboard from which acts of kindness are born. Hospitality involves the open invitation to others of your availability, care, respect, love, and sincerity. Barriers are removed when hospitality is engaged at the communion table. We must remind ourselves that table fellowship involves not just the sharing of a common meal, but the intertwining of mutual support, equality, honest regard for the other, and the willingness to stand in the gap.

In today's world, hospitality needs to become the hallmark for our treatment of refugees fleeing the ravages of war and stringent poverty, immigrants, and those in our midst whose socio-economic conditions are dire. The Church must become and remain a vital part of the caring team that offers support to those in need. In the underbelly of the Cayman Islands, many families need financial and social support. Many, because of personal dignity may not seek assistance, however, if there is discernment that assistance is required, it should be offered without hesitation.

It is a calling and ministry for each Congregation to identify and engage as often as possible. Pantry ministry, the delivery of meals, clothes closets for those who need such assistance, and the provision of gift vouchers for utility bills and groceries items are commendable and should be sustained. But beyond these physical actions, there needs to be the warmth of love and genuine acceptance extended to those who need our acts of hospitality.

Other reminders in the Text

The writer of the Hebrews in this text reminds us to continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. We are therefore required to bring relief to those in

prison and help those who suffer in any way. Their woundedness must be understood and relief should be given. To do so displays the capacity of our trust in God who is the provider and protector.

The text also speaks to the importance of marriage and the stability of family life. There is honour in marriage and this needs to be adhered to by those in the marriage as well as the community. Too often marriage is dishonoured and trivialized by the impurity of motives and intimate engagements with those outside the marriage.

The writer is also careful to warn us against the love and lure of money and its insatiable appetite. This speaks not only to the individual but to the systems that create and cause inequity, injustice, and marginalization. We can hear the cry around the world for relief from war, poverty, food insecurity, the cost of fuel, the issues with the supply chain, and the numerous spill-offs from these issues. There needs to be a balance between profit and greed, as the latter tends to create chaos in the lives of too many.

The text however reminds us of the need to depend on God rather than on the perishable things of this world. The writer echoes God's promise to Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; God will never leave you nor forsake you."

A key component in the text is the immutability of Christ. Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. We are reminded of the unchanging nature of Christ by Albert Simpson in the hymn 'Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same.

'Oh, how sweet the glorious message simple faith may claim: Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same; Still, He loves to save the sinful, heal the sick and lame, Cheer the mourner, still the tempest glory to His name! Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same, All may change, but Jesus never glory to His name! Glory to His name! Glory to His name!

The Church is called to partner with God

To respond to the spiritual, economic, emotional, and physical needs and circumstances of the most vulnerable, the Church and individual Christians are called to partner with God. Vulnerability, we hasten to remind ourselves, is not based solely on poverty, lack of adequate and equal opportunity, or depressed socio-economic conditions. Many who appear economically stable, physically able, and intellectually savvy can also be identified as vulnerable based on depravity in their spiritual or emotional circumstances.

As partners with God, we are required to be obedient to our high calling in Christ Jesus to recuse the perishing and to care for the dying. We are called to do so in humility and with generosity as we offer comfort, revive spirits, to love unconditionally.

We thank God that the Congregations in the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council have heard the call to respond to people with humility and generosity. We share some of the stories with you in this and the next week's edition.

South Sound United Church Mission Update – August 2022

By Ms. Sarah Ramkelawan

PART 1 – LOCAL MISSION

Pantry Ministry

The South Sound United Church (SSU) in collaboration with Elmslie Memorial United Church (EMU) offers a Pantry Ministry every Wednesday at EMU. Attendees are treated to a meal of hot soup, a brief message from God's word, and a bag of non-perishable groceries at the end. During the meal, there is fellowship and even singing. Anyone from the community can attend. Some attendees are from the Alcoholics Anonymous programme, and we celebrate with those who, through the Pantry Ministry, have found a church home and started worshipping at EMU.



Bethesda Counselling Centre (BCC)

The United Church in the Cayman Islands founded the BCC as part of its outreach to the community. BCC offers a range of counseling at a very affordable price. SSU acknowledges the importance of mental health, particularly after the last few years of Covid-19 restrictions, and as such has made a monthly

commitment to support the operation of BCC as well as support those who may need counseling services but cannot afford them.



The Bethesda Counselling Centre offers help to individuals, couples, and families who are in crisis or who wish to explore how to lead more fulfilled lives. Our qualified and experienced Counselor offers professional and confidential services.

Online and Phone therapy also provided. (68 Mary Street, 946-6575 or 924-4676)

Frances Bodden Girls Home (FBGH)

The FBH forms part of the CAYS Foundation in Cayman and provides a residence for 'at risk' teenage girls in our community. The Women's Group at South Sound United Church (SSU) recently spent an afternoon with the residents and a few employees at FBH, planting flowers in their front garden as well as enjoying a fellowship of games and a meal.

The SSU is active in the community, responding to various needs. Our minister together with someone from our leadership team will visit members in the community, some of whom are congregants that unable to attend church now. In the past few months, SSU has provided a quarantine facility and groceries for someone in need, contributed toward the replacement of the air condition unit at the Prospect Youth Centre, and provided meals for families requiring assistance.



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 28 (Sunday) 12th Sunday after Pentecost



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

August 28, 2022

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